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RUEHJI/AMEMBASSY JIDDA 0357
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TAGS: OREP (TOWER, JOHN), JO
SUBJECT: CODEL TOWER MEETING WITH CHIEF OF THE ROYAL
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1. ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY. AGAINST A BACKDROP OF MNF REDEPLOYMENT, CODEL TOWER'S MEETING WITH COURT MINISTER LARWAN KASIM WAS DOMINATED BY LEBANON AND ITS INTER-RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WIDER PEACE PROCESS. KASIM TOLD THE CODEL THAT U.S. MILITARY WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON IS THE ONLY OPTION AVAILABLE, BUT IS A SETBACK FOR THE U.S. AND ITS ARAB FRIENDS. PROGRESS TOWARD AN ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT WOULD HAVE POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE LEBANON CRISIS. THE U.S. IS IN DANGER OF BECOMING FURTHER ENTANGLED IN LEBANON, HE WARNED, AND BECAUSE IT HAS LITTLE INFLUENCE ON THE KEY PLAYERS, CHANCES OF SUCCESS ARE SMALL. ON THE WIDER PEACE PROCESS, KASIM SAID ALTHOUGH HE KNEW SYRIA WOULD FIGHT ANY PEACE AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL, JORDAN WOULD TAKE THE CALCULATED RISK IF IT WERE SURE THE U.S. WAS COMMITTED. JORDAN'S STAND AGAINST THE ARAB LEAGUE PRINCIPLE OF UNANIMITY IS A TACTIC TO MOVE THE PEACE PROCESS FORWARD BECAUSE HUSSEIN KNOWS SYRIA WILL NOT APPROVE A PALESTINIAN SETTLEMENT IN WHICH ARAFAT AND/OR HUSSEIN ARE THE MAIN PLAYERS. KASIM SAID PALESTINIANS RECENTLY HAVE TOLD HIM THAT IF ARAFAT REFUSES TO COME TO AMMAN TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE KING, IT WILL BE A KEY

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INDICATOR FOR THEM OF THE LOSS OF HIS LEADERSHIP ROLE. KASIM ASSERTED THAT THE GOJ WILL REFUSE TO TALK TO ARAFAT, IF HE COMES TO JORDAN WITHOUT MEMBERS OF HIS CENTRAL COMMITTEE. END SUMMARY.

3. SENATOR JOHN TOWER, REPRESENTATIVE JOHN MCCAIN, ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE STAFFERS MCGOVERN AND LOCHER, DCM DJEREJIAN AND POLOFF IMBRIE MET AT THE ROYAL DIWAN ON FEBRUARY 20 WITH NEWLY-APPOINTED CHIEF OF THE ROYAL COURT (AND FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER) MARWAN KASIM. THE HOUR-LONG MEETING, WHICH CONCENTRATED ON LEBANON, THE PEACE PROCESS AND THEIR INTERRELATIONSHIP, WAS BROKEN OFF WHEN KING MUSSEIN ARRIVED TO MEET WITH THE CODEL. (SEPTTEL).

4. SENATOR TOWER OPENED THE CONVERSATION BY COMMENTING THAT THE SITUATION IN LEBANON HAD DETERIORATED SINCE HIS PREVIOUS VISIT TO JORDAN APPROXIMATELY SIX WEEKS AGO. HE REMINDED KASIM THAT THE JORDANIANS TOLD HIM THEN THEY BELIEVED U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON WOULD DIMINISH U.S. INFLUENCE IN THE REGION AS A WHOLE. WITHDRAWAL IS NOW THE ONLY OPTION AVAILABLE TO THE U.S. BECAUSE MILITARILY THE U.S. CANNOT INFLUENCE THE SITUATION WITHOUT THE INTRODUCTION OF A MUCH LARGER FORCE. EVEN INCREASED MILITARY FORCES WOULD BE NOTHING MORE THAN A TACTICAL APPROACH TO A PROBLEM WHICH REQUIRES A STRATEGIC SOLUTION.

5. KASIM STATED THAT THE WORST THAT COULD HAPPEN HAS ALREADY TAKEN PLACE. WHILE JORDAN DOES NOT WANT TO ADOPT THE POSITION OF "WE TOLD YOU SO," LEBANESE DEVELOPMENTS ARE A SETBACK FOR THE U.S. AND ITS FRIENDS IN THE REGION. THE U.S. STARTED ON A DOWNWARD SLOPE AND MISSED MANY OPPORTUNITIES. IT PLAYED A MAJOR PART IN ARRIVING AT THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS IN LEBANON, ENTANGLING JORDAN AS WELL. FOR JORDAN, THE PROBLEM IS HOW TO ESTABLISH A NEW POSITION BASED ON A U.S. POLICY WHICH THE GOJ CAN BE SURE THE U.S. WILL NOT BACK AWAY FROM. JORDAN EXPECTS THE U.S. TO SHARE ITS THINKING ON THE PROBLEM WITH THE GOJ. IT IS NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN MOMENTUM, ESPECIALLY IN AN ELECTION YEAR. KASIM SAID HE FEARS THERE IS NO CHANCE THE U.S. CAN TAKE A CLEAR-CUT POSITION ON LEBANON, NOT

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BECAUSE OF THE ELECTION YEAR ALONE, BUT BECAUSE OTHERS SUCH AS SYRIA AND ISRAEL WANT THE U.S. ENMESHED IN LEBANON. THE SOVIETS BENEFIT FROM THE RESULT.

6. LAST WEEK, KASIM TOLD THE CODEL, SAUDI ARABIA PROPOSED A SOLUTION TO THE LEBANON PROBLEM WHICH WOULD ELIMINATE THE MAY 17 AGREEMENT. JORDAN THOUGHT THAT THE SAUDIS HAD CONSULTED WITH THE U.S. AND WERE ENTERING THE DIPLOMATIC FRAY TO GIVE THE U.S. A BREATHER. IT WAS A SURPRISE, WHEN JORDAN LEARNED THE PROPOSAL WAS REJECTED BY SYRIA AND THE LEBANESE FACTIONS. THEIR REFUSAL HAS ALLOWED OTHERS IN THE REGION TO STIFFEN

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THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE AGREEMENT.

7. KASIM ASSERTED THAT THE U.S. SHOULD ATTEND TO THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM FIRST, BEFORE LEBANON. MOVEMENT ON THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE WOULD THEN HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT ON LEBANON. THE OPPOSITE IS NOT TRUE; IF THE U.S. GIVES PRIORITY TO LEBANON, YOU WILL ONLY BECOME FURTHER ENTANGLED. IN ADDITION, THE PROBABILITY OF SUCCESS IN LEBANON IS SMALL BECAUSE THE U.S. DOES NOT CONTROL THE KEY PARTICIPANTS TO THE CONFLICT. IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE U.S. DOES HAVE INFLUENCE OVER ISRAEL, JORDAN AND A NUMBER OF OTHER ARAB STATES.

8. "WE WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SETTLEMENT ISSUE TO JORDAN", KASIM TOLD THE CODEL. JORDAN IS COMMITTED TO THE PRINCIPLE OF LAND FOR PEACE, BUT IS NOT GETTING ANYWHERE. AS TIME PASSES, THE WEST BANK IS BEING GOBBLED UP AND MORE SETTLERS ARE BEING LURED TO THE WEST BANK. THE U.S. POSITION ON THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES HAS BEEN IGNORED OR BOLDLY REJECTED BY ISRAEL. IF THE U.S. CANNOT BRING ISRAEL TO NEGOTIATIONS, EVEN IF JORDAN AGREES, NOTHING WILL HAPPEN.

9. TOWER SAID HE AGREED WITH MUCH OF WHAT KASIM SAID. THE PRINCIPLE PROBLEM FOR THE WHOLE REGION, THE SENATOR CONTINUED, IS THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. THE U.S. RECOGNIZES KING HUSSEIN IS THE KEY PLAYER IN THE ISSUE, BUT HIS ROLE IS REJECTED BY SYRIA. EVEN IF ALL THE ARAB STATES AGREED TO HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS, SYRIA WOULD REFUSE IT.

10. KASIM AGREED THAT SYRIA WOULD ADOPT A REJECTIONIST ROLE. "BUT," HE SAID, "I WOULD TAKE THE RISK IF I KNEW THE U.S. WERE COMMITTED. I WOULD TAKE THE CALCULATED RISK EVEN WHEN I KNOW SYRIA DOES NOT WANT THE ARABS TO HAVE THEIR LAND BACK." FOR JORDAN TO NEGOTIATE WITHOUT REGIONAL SUPPORT WOULD BE A CATASTROPHE. DESPITE SYRIA'S NEGATIVE ROLE, THE POLITICAL STRATEGY FOR A REGIONAL SOLUTION MUST INVOLVE SYRIA. MILITARY INTERVENTION IS NOT A SOLUTION AS WAS DEMONSTRATED IN IRAN.

11. KASIM TOLD THE CODEL THAT JORDAN HAS BECOME A LONER IN A MAJOR BATTLE FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. THE GOJ HAS TAKEN A POSITION AGAINST THE ARAB LEAGUE PRINCIPLE OF UNANIMITY, BECAUSE THERE IS NO SUCH THING IN THE ARAB OR ISLAMIC WORLD. THE RECENT OIC MEETING IN CASABLANCA WAS THE FIRST SUCCESSFUL FIGHT TO STOP THE FORCES OF RADICALISM FROM SABOTAGING SUCH A MAJOR CONFERENCE.

12. SENATOR TOWER RESPONDED THAT HIS CONCERN IS WHETHER THE PROBLEM OF UNANIMITY WILL STOP A POSSIBLE SOLUTION EVEN WITH U.S. SUPPORT AND U.S. PRESSURE ON ISRAEL ESPECIALLY SINCE IT IS CLEAR SYRIA WILL NOT APPROVE ANY PALESTINIAN SETTLEMENT

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IN WHICH ARAFAT IS THE SPOKESMAN OR HUSSEIN THE NEGOTIATOR. KASIM SAID JORDAN WILL WORK FOR A SOLUTION EVEN IF IT KNOWS SYRIA WILL WORK AGAINST IT. "I WILL DO IT," HE SAID, "IF I KNOW WE WILL GET SOMEPLACE. BUT IF WE WILL END UP IN A SWAMP, I WON'T TAKE THE RISK." KASIM CONCLUDED THAT JORDAN WILL NEVER SHY AWAY FROM THE PEACE PROCESS.

13. SENATOR TOWER ASKED IF WE ALL COULD AGREE TO PROCEED TOGETHER, WHETHER THE GULF STATES WOULD AGREE AS WELL. KASIM SAID IN RESPONSE THAT WHEN WE REACH AN AGREEMENT WITH THE PALESTINIANS, PREFERABLY WITH ARAFAT, WE WILL BE DRAWN TOGETHER. THE PEOPLE IN JORDAN AND THE WEST BANK KNOW THE REALITIES OF THE SITUATION. HE HAS SEEN MANY PALESTINIANS IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS AND THEY HAVE TOLD HIM THAT IF ARAFAT DOESN'T SHOW UP, IT WILL BE A KEY INDICATION FOR THEM OF THE LOSS OF HIS LEADERSHIP ROLE. HOWEVER, IF HE DOES COME TO JORDAN, WE WILL NOT TALK TO HIM ALONE. IF HE DOES COME ALONE, WE WILL TELL HIM WE WILL WAIT FOR HIS PEOPLE TO JOIN WITH HIM. HE HAS TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY MEMBERS OF HIS CENTRAL COMMITTEE. WE KNOW HE HAS DIFFICULTIES. BUT IF HE REFLECTS ON THE REAL INTERESTS OF THE PALESTINIANS, HE WILL GO ALONG WITH US. IF NOT, THEN HE SHOULD LET THE WEST BANKERS AND THE GAZANS HAVE THEIR VOICE. THEY SHOULD STRIP HIM NAKED IF HE DOES NOT COOPERATE. IT IS THEIR LIFE, THEIR AGONY, AND THEIR INTERESTS THAT ARE AT STAGE. HERE, KASIM ASSERTED, THE U.S. CAN PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE. JORDAN WILL PROVIDE SECURITY TO THE MODERATE PALESTINIANS AGAINST RADICAL ATTACKS. THE U.S., ON ITS PART, MUST PROVIDE SECURITY TO THE MODERATE PALESTINIANS AGAINST ISRAELI OBSTRUCTIONISM AND ATTACKS.

14. SENATOR TOWER ASKED WHO THE SYRIANS CONSIDER THE SPOKESMAN OF THE PALESTINIANS NOW THAT THEY HAVE DESTROYED THE MILITARY BASE OF THE PLO IN LEBANON. KASIM RESPONDED THAT EVER SINCE THE JORDANIANS ATTENDED THE FEZ SUMMIT IN MOROCCO THEY HAVE MAINTAINED A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PLO. SYRIA AT THAT TIME SAID TO US "WE WILL INVADE YOU AND DESTROY ARAFAT". KASIM SAID HE HAD TOLD THE SYRIANS DIRECTLY THAT JORDAN HAS ITS OWN POSITIONS TO DEFEND. IF THE SYRIANS BEHAVE IN THIS MANNER THEY WILL ONLY BE GIVING ISRAEL TIME TO ABSORB THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES.

15. CONTINUING, KASIM SAID THAT MUCH WILL DEPEND ON THE SOVIET POSITION VIS-A-VIS SYRIA. IT HAS TO BE DETERMINED WHETHER THE SOVIETS WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT SYRIA TO THE EXTENT THAT THERE IS A RISK OF ARMED CONFLICT. WE KNOW THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT WANTS TO ELIMINATE ARAFAT. THEY THEREFORE WANT TO CHOOSE AN ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP AND BUILD UP THE CREDIBILITY OF THE PLO DISSIDENTS IN THIS RESPECT. ONE WAY OF DOING THIS IS TO SEND THESE DISSIDENTS INTO LEBANON AGAIN TO ENGAGE IN A SUPERFICIAL "ARMED STRUGGLE" AGAINST THE ISRAELIS SPONSORED BY THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT. THE PLO DISSIDENTS, THEREFORE, WILL BECOME MORE CREDIBLE THAN ARAFAT. ALTERNATIVELY SYRIA COULD INFILTRATE PLO DISSIDENTS INTO JORDAN EITHER FOR SABOTAGE OR ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS. THE SYRIANS ARE IN FACT ACTIVATING SUCH OPERATIONS. THEY CAN ALSO USE "THEIR PLO" AS A TOOL TO

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EXTORT MORE MONEY FROM THE WEALTHY ARAB OIL STATES, ESPECIALLY SAUDI ARABIA. THEY ALSO ARE SUPPORTING SOVIET INTERESTS IN THE AREA BY GIVING AID TO RADICAL FORCES.

16. TURNING TO U.S. ELECTIONS AND THE DOMESTIC PRESSURES ASSOCIATED WITH THEM, KASIM SAID JORDAN HOPES THE U.S. CAN AT LEAST MAINTAIN ITS CURRENT

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POSITION. SYRIA KNEW HOW TO EXPLOIT THE ELECTIONS FOR ITS OWN ENDS, WITH A GESTURE TO JESSIE JACKSON AND BY SPINNING OUT ITS DIALOGUE WITH THE ADMINISTRATION UNTIL THE ELECTIONS DREW CLOSE. ASSAD ALSO KNOWS HOW TO EXPLOIT THE DIFFERING PRECEPTIONS OF HUMAN LIFE. HE KNEW IF THE U.S. LOST 100 MARINES IN 1984, IT WOULD DESTROY A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. BUT IF SYRIA WERE TO LOSE 10,000 SOLDIERS, HE COULD USE THEIR DEATHS TO RAISE HIS OWN CREDIBILITY IN THE ARAB WORLD BY CALLING THE "MARTYRS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ISRAEL AND IMPERIALISM."

17. IN CONCLUSION, REPRESENTATIVE MCCAIN ASKED ABOUT THE LIKELIHOOD OF OPEN SYRIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT. UNLIKELY, KASIM SAID. SYRIA WOULD NOT WANT TO ENGULF ITSELF IN REAL CONFLICT WITH ISRAEL.

18. THIS CABLE NOT CLEARED BY CODEL BEFORE DEPARTURE.

19. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED FOR BEIRUT. VIETS
END OF MESSAGE

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